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DEPARTMENT OF GROWTH MANAGEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Town of Bluffton Announces Participation in the Okatie River Section 319 Grant

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) recently awarded a Section 319 Grant from the EPA to the Lowcountry Council of Governments to improve the water quality of the Okatie River. The three-year \$392,018 grant is to implement a number of Best Management Practices (BMP's) throughout the Okatie River watershed that will reduce fecal coliform numbers in the river. The Okatie River has been listed as impaired for shellfish harvesting by SCDHEC since 1995.

Through this grant, the Town of Bluffton will install up to six pet waste stations along the Buckwalter Place Greenway Trail. Pet waste has been identified in the grant as a potential source of fecal coliform. Pet waste stations are an effective BMP that enable pet owners to be more responsible for their pets' waste. The Buckwalter Place Greenway Trail is currently being designed and expected to be open in early 2011. The 1.35 mile trail will extend along the wetland buffer at the edge of the property and sits at the headwaters draining to the Okatie River.

Project partners include Beaufort and Jasper counties, the Town of Bluffton, Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority, Beaufort Soil and Water Conservation District, Clemson Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Friends of the River, the Lowcountry Institute, Sun City Hilton Head Community Association, and the Coastal Conservation Association. The partners have agreed to match the grant with cash and in-kind services, bringing the total project cost to \$653,564.

To learn more, please contact John Carmack in the Office of Planning and Environmental Sustainability by phone at (843) 706-4512, email at jcarmack@townofbluffton.com, or visit our office at Town Hall, 20 Bridge Street.

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